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China Clay

By TREVOR BLAKEMORE

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By TREVOR BLAKEMORE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
F. M. McARTHUR

To Mr A. Raffin.
from
Trevor Blakemore
1923.
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Memories

Memories

FAR to the west the mountains rise
  Through the blue distance, ridge on ridge,
Grey-blue the silent stream reflects
  The blue wistaria round the bridge.

Silent, erect, in azure robe,
  Yen Shan, the exiled mandarin,
Listens and dreams he hears again
  The temple bells of old Pekin.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction

CROSS-LEGGED and stout sits old Si Yan,
  Upon a cushion fat as he,
A brazier glows at his left hand,
  A wine-jar stands beside his knee.

He drinks and dreams of happy days,
  Of all good things—old bottles shared,
Women who loved him, fan-tan gains,
  Jokes and true friends that time has spared.

His small eyes catch the brazier's red,
  The wine-jar's silver and the chinks
Of red and silver in the wine;
  He blinks and nods and nods and blinks.

The Monk

The Monk

DAY after day Ming-Kiang sits
Behind his lattice of bamboo,
And past the lamissary wall
The city's sounds come faintly through.

He lays aside his brush and scroll
To hear the soldiers clatter by,
To hear a girl's exultant laugh,
A sailor's oath, a trader's cry.

And sometimes life seems sweeter far
Than incense or gongs sonorous,
And love an edict that as wind
Sweeps out dust-dry Confucius.

Day after day he grows more gaunt,
More harsh of mouth, in eye more strange,
And old Confucius seems to sneer—
"Too late for choice, too late for change."

The Cang

The Cang

AH WONG, the Canton flower-boat thief,
Condemned to strangulation slow,
Hangs from a board that grips his neck,
His feet just scrape the dirt below.

His back is stretched in agony,
His toes beat up the yellow mud,
His mouth is open and his cheeks
Are darkened with congested blood.

Here within sight of many a crime,
His failing vision scans the shore,
The sun, the boats, the laughing folk,
The bright world he will see no more.

The Secret

The Secret

IN gorgeous silks with pearl and jade,
As Middle-Kingdom's high-born bride,
She holds long hours of formal court,
A fragile tea-cup at her side.

Each night by the plum-blossom's hedge,
White blooms above, a flowery lace,
A lover clasps her to his breast
United in a sweet embrace.

And so behind her mask-like calm
She sits close-wrapped in ecstasy,
The weary day made brief with thought
Of what has been and what will be.

Restraint

Restraint

IN the fresh autumn morning, leaves
  Golden and red, by light airs blown,
Sail through the sunshine in the wood
  Where Li Fu sits, a thing of stone.

To-day they give the one he loves
  To an old merchant, rich and feared,
He sees the lips his own has pressed
  Touched by dry mouth and scraggy beard.

No cloud of pain shows in his eyes,
  His mouth is calm, his face resigned,
But agony and mad despair
  Lash all day his quivering mind.

The Priest

The Priest

WITHIN the temple all is still,
And in its dusk keen glints of bronze
Flicker as grim malignant eyes
That never leave the kneeling bonze.

He lifts his head and through the gloom,
Behind the fierce-faced Gods he sees
Drift by the ghosts of shaven priests,
The wraiths of countless centuries.

And suddenly he feels more dead
Than those grey shadows who return,
Quick with the mysteries of life,
Which he by death alone can learn.

Escape

Escape

A GROUP of red-plumed horsemen plunge
  Out of the bamboo wood—too late,
They sweep across the muddy shore,
  Waving their spears in baffled hate.

Where the wide river meets the wave,
  Dark-massed and rolling heavily,
Her sails set to the rising wind
  A great junk plunges out to sea.

Chen Yaun, by the high poop's rail
  Sees wind and night before his barque,
Looks once behind, then with white lips
  Blesses the storm and gathering dark.

Moonrise

Moonrise

THE giant pagoda in the moon-grey sky
  Looms like a monster reared and poised to spring
Upon the river that the willow-trees
  Make black and silver, ever glimmering.

In the still garden, heavy-sweet with scent,
  Stands tense and waiting long, a Chinese girl,
Listening each whisper in the hush of night,
  Her eager face half shadow, half bright pearl.

Then suddenly she moves and her eyes shine,
  She clasps her breast that leaps with love and fear,
For far away sounds low a muffled oar
  That none save waiting love would ever hear.

Captives

Captives

MONG-MONG, aged ten, who toils and leads
  Two brothers and a sister small,
Watches a sulphur butterfly
  That hovers near the garden wall.

She sees it flit from bloom to bloom,
  And for a moment her dull glance
Is full of envy, till a thought
  Of wonder comes—its wings, perchance,

Are not more free than her tired feet,
  Its flight no happier than her way,
Since some grim god may dwell unseen,
  To chide it at the end of day.

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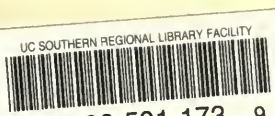

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